

Our Part in the Solution of a Great Problem

A Statement of the Work of the American Baptist Home Mission Society for the Christian Education of Negroes

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EDITORIAL NOTE



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George Sale, D.D., Superintendent of Education in the twenty-six institutions aided by the American Baptist Home Mission Society, has recently written an article entitled, "Our Part in the Solution of a Great Problem." This article is so replete with practical information, based on an experience of nearly twenty years of official connection with these institutions,—fifteen years as president of Atlanta Baptist College and more than two years Superintendent of Education of the American Baptist Home Mission Society,—that we believe it will contribute much to the purpose for which this book is printed; hence we reproduce it. We have introduced many sub-heads that you may more easily discover the part of the article that will most interest you.

"One Person in Every Ten is a Negro"

THE population of the United States is 75,994,575. The Negro population is 8,833,994, or 11.06 per cent of the whole. These are the figures of the census of 1900. It is within the truth, therefore, to say that one person in every ten is a Negro. Forty years ago the fathers of this great section of our population were newly-emancipated slaves. Large numbers have shaken off the shackles, but these stand against the dark background of the multitude which still bears the moral and industrial heritage of slavery and sudden freedom.

"What this Nation has done"

In speaking of the progress of the Negro we lay stress on the reduction of the percentage of illiteracy. We forget that there are more Negro illiterates to-day than there were at emancipation. This is what this nation has done: It has freed its slaves at awful cost, and it has allowed one half of the vast progeny of those slaves to grow up in ignorance. Here, then, is the nation's heritage of slavery. This is to test our national ideals of democ-

racy and the genuineness of our Christianity. Meanwhile, there is here a unique philanthropic and missionary problem. As a Christian denomination organized for missionary endeavor we need to ask ourselves afresh, What is our part in this great problem?

"Most Pathetic"

We should approach this question in genuine sympathy, both with the Negroes and the white people of the South.

One of the most pathetic things in the history of this nation is the widening breach between the white and black people, especially in the South. One cannot fail to be deeply touched by the stories of the fidelity of Negroes to their masters and the affection of master for slave under the régime of slavery.

In Henry W. Grady's last speech, delivered in Boston in 1899, he spoke of these things as follows:

"The love we feel for that race you cannot measure nor comprehend. As I attest it here the spirit of my old black mammy, from her home up there, looks down to bless, and through the tumult of this night steals the sweet music of her crooning as thirty years ago she held me in her black arms and led me smiling into sleep.

"A Black Man's Loyalty"

"This scene vanishes as I speak, and I catch a vision of an old Southern home. . . . I see women with strained and anxious faces and children alert yet helpless. I see night come down with its dangers and its apprehensions, and in a big, lonely room I feel on my tired head the touch of loving hands . . . as they lay a mother's blessing there, while at her knees . . . I thank God that she is safe in her sanctuary, because her slaves, sentinel in the silent cabin or guard at her chamber door, put a black man's loyalty between her and danger.

"Reckless of the Hurling Death"

"I catch another vision: The crisis of battle—a soldier struck, staggering, fallen. I see a slave scuffling through the smoke, winding his black arms about the fallen form, reckless of the hurling death, bending his trusty face to catch the words that tremble on the stricken lips; so wrestling meantime with agony that he would lay down his life in his master's stead. I see him by the weary bedside ministering with uncomplaining patience, praying with all his humble heart that God would lift his master up, until death comes in mercy and in honor to still the soldier's agony and seal the soldier's life.